

**APPENDIX B: KING COUNTY ORDINANCE 15279 –
VETERANS AND HUMAN SERVICES LEVY**



KING COUNTY

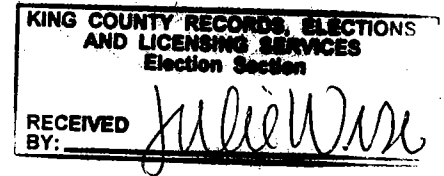
1200 King County Courthouse
516 Third Avenue
Seattle, WA 98104

Signature Report

September 13, 2005

Ordinance 15279

05 SEP 13 PM 3:21



Proposed No. 2005-0324.2

Sponsors Ferguson, Patterson, Lambert and
Irons

1 AN ORDINANCE providing for the submission to the
2 qualified electors of King County at a special election to be
3 held in King County on November 8, 2005, of a proposition
4 to provide regional health and human services to residents
5 of King County by authorizing a property tax levy in excess
6 of the levy limitation contained in chapter 84.55 RCW, for
7 a consecutive six year period at a rate of not more than
8 \$0.05 per one thousand dollars of assessed valuation, for
9 the purpose of providing funding to enable the provision of
10 health and human services such as housing, mental health
11 counseling, substance abuse prevention and treatment,
12 employment assistance and other essential regional health
13 and human services for residents of King County and
14 establishing two county citizen oversight boards to review
15 and report on expenditures of levy proceeds, contingent on
16 voter approval of the levy.
17

BE IT ORDAINED BY THE COUNCIL OF KING COUNTY:

SECTION 1. Findings:

A. Chapter 73.08 RCW is titled "Veterans' Relief" and assigns responsibility for veterans' aid to counties. This provision was originally made in 1888 following the Civil War. RCW 73.08.080 establishes a specific property tax for counties to provide veterans' assistance for eligible veterans and their dependents. This statute requires counties to levy a property tax of between 1.125 cents and 27 cents per one thousand dollars of assessed value for veterans' assistance. This portion of the county's regular property tax levy amount is dedicated to veterans' relief.

B. The veterans levy was established by King County and first levied at a rate of \$0.025 per one thousand dollars of assessed value but subsequent changes in state law limiting property tax increases in chapter 84.55 RCW and a recent initiative, Initiative 747, have reduced the effective rate. The current millage is approximately \$0.0088 per one thousand dollars of assessed value. Therefore, a home with an assessed value of \$300,000 currently pays approximately \$2.60 a year to support local veterans' assistance programs.

C. Approximately 180,900 veterans live in King County representing twenty-seven percent of the state's veterans. The population of veterans in the state is growing and Washington ranks twelfth nationwide for the total number of veterans in the state.

D. The federal Department of Veterans Affairs ("DVA") spent nearly \$1,500,000,000 in Washington in 2003 to serve nearly 641,000 veterans who live in the state. Last year, over 85,000 people in Washington received health care and more than

41 94,000 veterans and survivors received disability compensation or pension payments
42 from the DVA. More than 12,000 veterans, reservists or survivors used GI Bill payments
43 for their education over 75,000 veterans, reservists or survivors own homes with active
44 DVA home loan guarantees. And over 2,000 interments have been conducted at Tahoma
45 National Cemetery since it opened in 1997.

46 E. In fiscal year 2003, DVA facilities in Washington had 12,058 inpatient
47 admissions at DVA and contracted community facilities and provided 1,020,972
48 outpatient visits, including community outpatient care. In Washington, DVA operates
49 major medical centers in Walla Walla and Spokane, as well as a two-division facility, the
50 VA Puget Sound Health Care system, in Seattle and Tacoma. VA Puget Sound operates
51 512 beds, with 291 authorized or acute care, 131 nursing home beds, 60 domiciliary beds
52 and 30 residential rehabilitation beds. VA Puget Sound operates a community-based
53 outpatient clinic in Bremerton and contracts primary care with the University of
54 Washington Physicians Network clinics in Shoreline, Federal Way and Woodinville.
55 These clinics serve 3,000 patients. Outpatient clinics provide primary and in some cases
56 mental health care, while specialty care is provided at the medical center.

57 F. The Veterans Integrated Service Network ("VISN") 20, which includes
58 Alaska, Idaho, Oregon and Washington, reported the highest percentage of homeless
59 veterans hospitalized for mental health reasons at nearly fifty percent, compared with
60 VA's national average of twenty-eight percent. The network ranked fifth in the nation for
61 the percentage of homeless veterans with acute psychiatric disorders and fourth in the
62 nation for admissions of homeless veterans with substance abuse problems, which is
63 nearly double the national average.

64 G. The Puget Sound region has a growing homeless population, estimated to be
65 as many as 8,000 on any given night. The DVA estimates that there are as many as 2,800
66 homeless veterans in the Puget Sound region. In King County the estimate is around
67 1,500 to 1,600 homeless veterans based on an overall homeless population of 6,500.

68 Many factors contribute to the problem of homelessness among veterans.
69 Unemployment, chemical and substance abuse and mental illness are prominent among
70 them.

71 H. The National Center for Post Traumatic Stress Disorder ("PTSD") estimates
72 that thirty percent of men of women who have served in the military during conflict will
73 suffer from mental illness. PTSD can cause problems such as memory and cognitive
74 disorders, inability to function in social or family life, severe depression and occupational
75 instability. Substance abuse is an extremely common form of self-medication in those
76 suffering from PTSD, according to the center's studies.

77 I. According to the DVA, about forty-eight percent of homeless veterans suffer
78 from mental illness and slightly more than sixty-eight percent have suffered from drug or
79 alcohol or drug abuse problems. Thirty-five percent have both psychiatric and substance
80 abuse disorders. As the largest and most complex medical center in the VISN 20
81 network, VA Puget Sound Health Care system reported the highest percentage of
82 homeless veterans in its acute mental health programs.

83 J. According to the DVA, across the nation one-third of adult homeless men and
84 nearly one-quarter of all homeless adults have served in the armed forces. More than
85 299,000 veterans may be homeless on any given night and as many as 500,000 may
86 experience homelessness during a year. Many other veterans are considered at risk

87 because of poverty, lack of support from family and friends and precarious living
88 conditions in overcrowded or substandard housing.

89 K. According to the National Coalition for Homeless Veterans, despite statutory
90 requirements and annual increases in the Veterans Health Administration budget each
91 year, the VA's mental health and addiction treatment capacity has deteriorated. Closures
92 or curtailment of inpatient psychiatric and residential substance abuse rehabilitation
93 facilities have not been counteracted by complementary increases in outpatient treatment
94 capacity. According to the VA Committee on the Care of Veterans with Serious Mental
95 Illness, VA spending on mental health and addiction services has declined by eight
96 percent over the past seven years, and by twenty-five percent when adjusted for inflation.

97 L. The VA reports that since the start of war in Iraq in March, 2003 more than
98 26,000 men and women in the military have applied to receive their benefits. Fully a
99 third of those claims have still not been processed.

100 M. The annual operating budget for King County's veterans' program is
101 approximately \$2,100,000. The operating budget currently funds seven full-time
102 employees, contract services and direct aid for eligible veterans.

103 N. King County's veterans services include:

104 1. Financial aid and emergency assistance for rent, food, utilities, medical needs
105 and burial;

106 2. Employment services such as job placement, career counseling, job training;
107 transportation and employment support services, such as clothing and tools;

108 3. Mental health counseling, including crisis and PTSD counseling and
109 intervention services; and

110 4. Case management services, which provide assistance for those needing
111 transitional or permanent housing, claims or help getting into treatment programs.

112 O. King County also contracts for veteran services to provide long-term housing,
113 short-term housing, treatment for trauma, homeless prevention, veterans' incarcerated
114 prevention and other programs.

115 P. The county's current expense fund faces continuing challenges in future years,
116 including anticipated shortfalls in 2006 and 2007 in excess of twenty million dollars each
117 year. As a discretionary service under state law, human service funding is threatened
118 with significant additional cuts if they remain reliant primarily on current expense
119 funding.

120 **SECTION 2. Definitions.** The definitions in this section apply throughout this
121 ordinance unless the context clearly require otherwise.

122 A. "Family" means a veteran's or military personnel's spouse, domestic partner or
123 child or the child of the spouse or domestic partner or other dependent relatives if living in
124 the household of a veteran or military personnel.

125 B. "Human services for veterans" means services and projects of the King County
126 veterans' program specifically developed to meet the needs of veterans, military
127 personnel and their families in King County.

128 C. "Levy" means the levy of regular property taxes for the specific purpose and
129 term provided in this ordinance and authorized by the electorate in accordance with state
130 law.

131 D. "Levy proceeds" means the principal amount of funds raised by the levy and
132 any interest earnings on the funds.

133 E. "Military personnel" means those persons currently serving in a branch of the
134 military, including the National Guard and reservists for any branch of the military.

135 F. "Regional health and human services" means a range of services and related
136 capital facilities, including housing, that meet basic human needs and promote safe and
137 healthy communities including but not limited to:

138 1. Prevention and early intervention services that reduce or prevent adverse
139 human behaviors and social conditions that lead to crises, serious dysfunction or
140 disability;

141 2. Criminal justice linked services that assist individuals and their families avoid
142 or mitigate their involvement with the justice system;

143 3. Crisis intervention services that address life threatening situations and other
144 crises;

145 4. Rehabilitation and support services that provide treatment for individual and
146 family problems or provides support to maintain or enhance their present level of
147 independence.

148 G. "Veterans" mean those persons who have served in any branch of the military,
149 including the National Guard and reservists for any branch of the military.

150 **SECTION 3. Levy submittal to voters.** To provide necessary funds for the
151 provision of regional health and human services to King County's veterans, military
152 personnel and their families, the county council shall submit to the qualified electors of
153 the county a proposition authorizing a regular property tax levy in excess of the levy
154 limitation contained in chapter 84.55 RCW for six consecutive years, commencing in
155 2005, with collection beginning in 2006, at a rate not to exceed five cents per one

thousand dollars of assessed value. In accordance with RCW 84.55.050, this levy shall be a regular property tax levy, which is subject to the statutory rate limit of RCW 84.52.043

SECTION 4. Deposit of levy proceeds. The levy proceeds shall be deposited in two special revenue funds which fund shall be created by ordinance. The levy proceeds shall be divided to place fifty percent of the levy proceeds in one fund designated for the provision of regional health and human services for veterans, military personnel and their families. The remaining fifty percent of the levy proceeds shall be placed in another fund designated for the provision of regional health and human services to a wide range of low-income people in need of such services.

SECTION 5. Eligible expenditures. If approved by the qualified electors of the county, all levy proceeds shall be used to pay the costs associated with provision of regional health and human services to a wide range of low-income people in need of such services, including, but not limited to, services for veterans, military personnel and their families, services for children and youth, the elderly, the unemployed and underemployed and for services specific to veterans' needs such as treatment for posttraumatic stress disorder and specialized employment assistance. The regional health and human services will also include a range of regional health and human services and related capital facilities including, but not limited to, housing assistance, homelessness prevention, mental health counseling substance abuse prevention and treatment and employment assistance.

Eligible expenditures shall also include payment of costs to strengthen and improve the health and human services system and infrastructure to provide greater

access to services and engender better coordination and integration of regional health and human services addressing the needs of veterans, military personnel and their families.

SECTION 6. Call for special election. In accordance with RCW 29A.04.321, it is hereby deemed that an emergency exists requiring the submission to the qualified electors of the county at a special election to be held on November 8, 2005, a proposition authorizing a regular property tax levy for the purposes described in this ordinance. The manager of the records, elections and licensing services division shall cause notice to be given of this ordinance in accordance with the state constitution and general law and to submit to the qualified electors of the county, at the said special county election, the proposition hereinafter set forth. The clerk of the council shall certify that proposition to the manager of the records, elections and licensing services division, in substantially the following form, with such additions, deletions or modifications as may be required for the proposition listed below by the prosecuting attorney:

PROPOSITION ____: The King County council has passed Ordinance _____ concerning funding for regional health and human services. This proposition would fund health and human services such as housing assistance, mental health counseling, substance abuse prevention and treatment and employment assistance. It would also fund capital facilities and improved access to and coordination of services for veterans, military personnel and their families. It would authorize King County to exceed RCW 84.55 regular property tax limitations and levy an additional property tax of 5 cents per \$1,000 of assessed valuation for six consecutive years with collection beginning in 2006. Should this proposition be:
Approved? _____

202 Rejected? _____

203 SECTION 7. County citizen oversight boards established. If the levy is
204 approved by the voters in accordance with section 6 of this ordinance, two county citizen
205 oversight boards shall be established. The boards shall consist of twelve members, to be
206 appointed on or after January 15, 2006. The veterans citizen oversight board shall
207 oversee the funds for regional human services for veterans, military personnel and their
208 families. The regional human service board shall oversee the funds for regional health
209 and human services for a wide range of low-income people in need of such services.
210 Each councilmember shall nominate a representative from the councilmember's district
211 to each board. If the executive does not appoint a person who has been nominated by a
212 councilmember, the executive must request that the councilmember nominate another
213 candidate for appointment. The executive shall appoint three representatives from the
214 membership of the King County veterans advisory board to serve on the citizen oversight
215 board. For the regional human services board, the executive shall nominate three at-large
216 representatives who are poor or represent an organization that is composed of the poor,
217 such as Welfare Rights, Retired Senior Citizens, Seattle Young People Project and others.
218 These at-large members shall also be from three geographic areas of King County
219 representing: south King County; east King County; and Seattle and north King County.
220 Board members shall be confirmed by the council. Members shall be residents of King
221 County with a diverse, balanced representation of private and public sectors, veterans,
222 community leaders, jurisdictions and human service representatives. Members shall be
223 residents of King County and may not be elected or appointed officials of any unit of
224 government. On or before June 1 of each year beginning in the year 2007, the board shall

225 review and report to the King County executive and the King County council on the
226 expenditure of levy proceeds.

227 SECTION 8. Ratification. Certification of the proposition by the clerk of the
228 county council to the manager of the records and elections division in accordance with
229 law before the election on November 8, 2005, and any other act consistent with the
230 authority and before the effective date of this ordinance are hereby ratified and
231 confirmed.

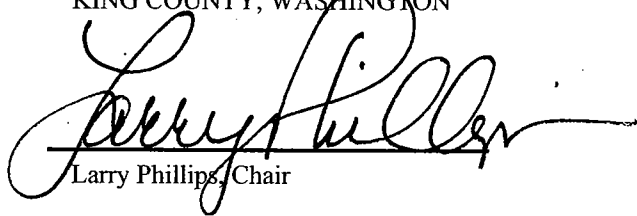
232 SECTION 9. Severability. If any provision of this ordinance or its application to

233 any person or circumstance is held invalid, the remainder of the ordinance or the
234 application of the provision to other persons or circumstances is not affected.
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Ordinance 15279 was introduced on 8/15/2005 and passed as amended by the
Metropolitan King County Council on 9/12/2005, by the following vote:

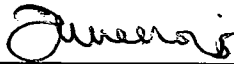
Yes: 12 - Mr. Phillips, Ms. Edmonds, Mr. von Reichbauer, Mr. Pelz, Mr.
Dunn, Mr. Ferguson, Mr. Hammond, Mr. Gossett, Ms. Hague, Mr. Irons, Ms.
Patterson and Mr. Constantine
No: 1 - Ms. Lambert
Excused: 0

KING COUNTY COUNCIL
KING COUNTY, WASHINGTON



Larry Phillips, Chair

ATTEST:



Anne Noris, Clerk of the Council

APPROVED this 13 day of September, 2005.



Ron Sims, County Executive

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KING COUNTY COUNCIL

Attachments None